




Episode 1x20:
"WAR CRIMES"

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Teaser

EXT. ELYSIAN HILLS – FIELD – NIGHT – ESTABLISHING

A broken field, littered with bodies, debris, and other remnants of warfare, is the valley between hills. In the distance, EXPLOSIONS and SOUNDS OF BATTLE can be heard.

TITLE: Elysian Hills, Boros – Seven Years Ago

EXT. ELYSIAN HILLS – NIGHT

ZOE and MAL rush down a hill and onto the field, Zoe looking ahead, Mal covering the rear. At the base of the hill, they pause, catching their breath.

ZOE
Think we lost them?

Mal nods, then a single GUNSHOT cracks from the next hill. It is followed by a second shot, then a third. This is not the sound of battle, but rather single, paced shots.

Zoe grimaces as Mal rushes across the field toward the sound.

EXT. ELYSIAN HILLS – HILLTOP – NIGHT

Mal and Zoe cautiously crawl up to the top of a hill as another gunshot sounds.

They look across to

THE NEXT HILL

A dozen ALLIANCE SOLDIERS surround a pair of kneeling Browncoat PRISONERS. Four other prisoners are already dead.

An OFFICER stands behind the first living prisoner, a pistol pointed at the prisoner's head.

OFFICER
(grim, smug)
You give me trouble, you die.

He shoots the prisoner dead.

OFFICER (cont'd)
<Feces-colored vagrant.>

The Officer moves to the other prisoner.

OFFICER (cont'd)
How about you? You want to live? I'll ask you once.
Where's the comm array?

The prisoner doesn't look up, but is clearly terrified. The Officer blows him away and moves to the final prisoner.

ON THE FIRST HILL

Mal looks on, horrified. He and Zoe are far enough away, and well-concealed enough that they are not in danger of being easily spotted, but there is little they can do.

MAL
Jesus in Heaven, <have mercy on him, for I sure won't>!

Mal cocks his gun.

ZOE
There's too many of them. And we've got to warn HQ that they know about the comm array.

Another gunshot from the next hill.

ZOE (cont'd)
It's too late.

Mal knows she right, but doesn't want to accept it.

ZOE (cont'd)
Not now, Mal. Another time.

He nods and closes his eyes. Zoe looks across the hill, studying the Officer as he stands over the dead prisoners.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – DAY

From Zoe on the hill, we go to Zoe prepping the HOVER-MULE, as JAYNE straps down the cargo: a dozen BARRELS. Over a hundred other barrels are stacked and secured in the bay.

The ship shudders, and they both look up from their work.

MAL (OS)
(somewhere above them)
What was that?

INT. SERENITY – INARA’S SHUTTLE – SAME TIME

Mal and INARA stand at the entrance to Inara’s shuttle. They appear to be in mid-argument, interrupted by the shaking of the ship.

He looks around, but gets no immediate response, and the shaking stops.

MAL (cont’d)
(to Inara)
Where were we?

INARA
We were talking about how you’re not taking me to Bena.

MAL
I’ll get you to your training house soon enough, I
promise—

INARA
You’ve been promising that for two weeks. Two weeks
spent so far in <the ass-end of nowhere>, that even you
couldn’t find work!

MAL
I have work now, and so do you.

INARA
(ignoring him, in full-rant mode)
And now, by some miracle, I’ve found a client on one of
your <piss-pot> moons, and what do you tell me? That
you’re in too much of a hurry to let me stay the night and
fulfill my obligations as Companion?

Mal looks around, perhaps expecting the ship to begin shaking again.

MAL
Don’t know what you need all night for. Any whore worth
her salt can get the job done in ten minutes.

INARA
That’s what separates a Companion from a whore. Not
that I expect you’ll ever have cause to know the
difference.

MAL

I thought it was that fancy registration Nandi's girls didn't have.

At the mention of the name, they both freeze. Beat.

MAL (cont'd)

Anyways, you mistake my meaning. Didn't say you couldn't stay the night.

INARA

Of course, you wouldn't come out and say that. It's just, "I'm not sure we really lost that Alliance cruiser, everyone be ready to boost out at a moment's notice." How am I going to manage that if I'm with my client?

MAL

You're smart, went to whore academy. Use some of them fancy tricks they taught you.

Inara glares daggers at him.

MAL (cont'd)

I ain't lettin' that cruiser catch us on the ground, anyways. And I'd find it very unpleasant to leave my shuttle behind—

INARA

Oh, it's your shuttle, now?

MAL

You're leavin' ain't ya? Already gave you back your security deposit and all. I'd say that makes it my shuttle again.

The ship shakes, as if experiencing engine trouble.

MAL (cont'd)

What is that?

Mal pushes past Inara and walks away from here so that he can look down into the cargo hold. Inara watches him go, shakes her head, then heads toward her shuttle.

Mal reaches the edge of the catwalk and looks

BELOW

Where Zoe and Jayne look up from their work.

MAL (cont'd)
What is that?

Zoe shakes her head. Jayne shrugs.

Kaylee, covered in soot and grease and carrying a BENT PART, walks in from the stairs near the infirmary.

MAL (cont'd)
(to Kaylee)
Thought you and your dad fixed us up.

KAYLEE
Fixed up what we could with those parts you got on
Beaumonde on the cheap, Captain, but some of what's
left is older'n me!

She holds up the bent part, looking like she's very close to breaking.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
Dorsal boot's worn... Couple of couplings... Inertial
dampener's locking... That's what the shake is—

MAL
What's that one do again?

KAYLEE
Can't boost without it. Well, you could, but we'd all be
streaks on the walls... Forty gees of pressure.

MAL
Well, you don't let that happen, all right? I like being all
three-dimensional.
(to everyone)
Why's everything have to break now?

Zoe doesn't even look up at him.

ZOE
I'd say karma, sir, but that don't explain why it's
happenin' to me, too.

KAYLEE
Maybe we can get replacement parts with some of the
take?

MAL

Long's you don't spend more'n we make.

(to Zoe)

Mule prepped?

ZOE

Near done, Captain. Be ready before my mister sets us down at Talltree.

Mal turns to head toward the stairs, and as he does so, is startled by RIVER, who is standing very nearby, staring at him. River looks at him, then turns to stare at the closed door to Inara's shuttle. Beat, as Mal realizes Inara's no longer there.

RIVER

She's gone.

MAL

Not yet, little one. Just off servicing.

RIVER

No, she's gone inside. Not her in there.

MAL

Who's in there then?

RIVER

The Companion. Inara's ghost. You think it's her but there's nothing there, just what's left of a person all hollowed out.

She turns to stare at Mal, all creepy-eyed.

RIVER (cont'd)

You're all hollow too.

He smiles, trying to make light, but it's a halfhearted smile.

MAL

Okay, that's just a bit weird.

(pinches himself)

I feel substantial. Pudgy, even.

(yells down to Zoe)

Zoe, am I a ghost?

ZOE

Sometimes I'm amazed you're not one yet, sir.

MAL

What's that supposed to mean?

The ship shakes again, but this time, it's a different type of shake, accompanied by a SOUND that might be a muffled explosion.

MAL
Kaylee?

KAYLEE
(nervous)
Weren't the inertial dampener that time.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

WASH sits at the controls, banking the ship hard to the left. As he does so, he slaps the comm on with one hand.

WASH
(into the comm)
Captain, you better get up here!

EXT. ABOVE TALLTREE – SAME TIME – ESTABLISHING

Talltree is built around a hill, with a small, walled compound atop it. Most of the community is a ramshackle collection of homes, warehouses, and other buildings (enough to accommodate a thousand or so citizens) that spills into the large fields of grain and corn that surround the city. Some of the fields are on fire, and smoke boils up from various parts of the city.

As SERENITY sails overhead, a MISSILE launches from the city. The ship, under Wash's control, jukes to the side and the missile explodes where it once was.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Wash is not happy.

WASH (cont'd)
Now!



EXT. ABOVE TALLTREE – SECONDS LATER

Serenity veers away from town. Another missile rockets toward it but goes wide.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – SAME TIME

Mal and Zoe pound in, joining Wash, who doesn't look up, instead focusing intently on the controls of the ship.

MAL
What the gorram—

WASH
Aint aircraft missile.

MAL
What?

WASH
Sure wasn't a duck.

MAL
Inara?

WASH
I think she got off okay.

ZOE
Why would they be shooting at us?

Jayne saunters in.

JAYNE
Why not? Everybody else does?

Mal ignores Jayne, taps Wash on the shoulder. He points to something they can both see through the forward port.

MAL
Them hills over there? Can you set us down?

JAYNE
Set us down? We should be leavin'!

ZOE
Can't leave—

MAL
—Inara's still here.

SHEPHERD BOOK comes in behind them. As he does so, the ship shakes again—inertial dampener, not missile—and he's forced to grab hold of the doorway.

WASH
Captain, the inertial dampener—

MAL
(nodding)
I know. Going. Which is what we should be doin'.

ZOE
So what do we do? Can't go back and make the delivery like this.

JAYNE
I say we leave. Ruttin' grain we're ferrying ain't worth dyin' over.

MAL
We can't leave Inara behind!

Beat, as everyone, even Wash, looks at him.

BOOK
What's happened?

JAYNE
Missiles from town. Somebody don't like us. Surprise, surprise.

BOOK
(to Mal)
It has to have been some kind of mistake. Some of these guns are set to fire automatically if they don't receive the right codes.

JAYNE
(to Wash)
Why didn't you give 'em the code?

WASH
Nobody told me about a code!

MAL
Never mind about no code. Just set us down. Try not to crash us too badly.

WASH
I ever crash us, Captain, it'll be a work of art.

MAL
Ain't payin' ya for art.

Wash smiles up.

WASH
Ain't barely payin' me at all, Captain.

Zoe gives her husband a "Just fly the gorram ship" look.

EXT. HILLS OUTSIDE TALLTREE – DAY – ESTABLISHING

Serenity sets down in a peaceful valley, safe for the moment.

INT. SERENITY – COCKPIT – DAY

Wash fiddles with the comm, as Mal, Zoe, and Jayne gather around.

WASH
I think... Almost. Yep, here we go.

An image of GEOFFREY, a nervous-looking man, well-dressed, mid-twenties, fills the comm screen. His image throughout the conversation is riddled with static.

GEOFFREY
Am I speaking to the crew of Serenity?

MAL
That you are.

GEOFFREY
Captain Reynolds, I assume? I must apologize for the rude greeting. Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Patrician Geoffrey Landon.

MAL
You shot at us, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY
We didn't, I can assure you...
(beat)
There was some... local unpleasantness.

JAYNE
He ain't seen unpleasant. Not 'til I—

Zoe glares at him.

GEOFFREY
(apparently none the wiser)
It's been taken care of, however.

In the image, Geoffrey looks over his shoulder.

MAL
What ain't you tellin' me?

GEOFFREY
Things are quite safe, I can assure you. There won't be a repeat of the, er, weapons malfunction we experienced earlier.

MAL
Ain't what I'm asking.
(beat, no response from Geoffrey)
What about Cariss? He's the man set up the job.

GEOFFREY
Patrician Cariss is currently unavailable, but has asked that I discuss business matters with you.

JAYNE
Because Patrician Cariss's dead.

Again, a glare from Zoe.

GEOFFREY
Captain, I again sincerely apologize for the unpleasant circumstances of your arrival, but I'd like to conclude our business, if at all possible. You have our grain, and we have your coin.

Geoffrey lets it hang in the air. Mal looks at the crew, then back at the comm.

MAL
We launched a shuttle right before we got fired on. You know if it got to where it was headin' safe?

GEOFFREY
I believe it did, but I can't confirm that at this moment. Because of Talltree's magnetic patterns, communications can be difficult at times.

ZOE
(quietly, to Mal)
I'm sure she's all right, sir.

Mal ignores her.

MAL

You want your grain, price has gone up, on account of the danger to me and mine. Gettin' shot at weren't no part of no deal I made. I want an extra twenty-five percent. Up front.

WASH

(stage whisper)

And a new inertial dampener.

MAL

And a new inertial dampener. And some other parts. I'll have a list.

GEOFFREY

That may be difficult to arrange—

MAL

Someone's got to eat and it ain't us.

Geoffrey shifts offscreen for a moment, perhaps conferring with someone.

WASH

Actually, it is us.

Zoe gives him her "If you want to have sex soon, you'll shut up" look.

GEOFFREY

I'll arrange it. As a show of good faith, I'll come pick you up personally.

JAYNE

Yeah, here's a good plan.

MAL

(ignoring Jayne)

Best not be any more problems. There's lots of colonies would pay shiny gold for that grain.

At Mal's signal, Wash kills the comm.

WASH

Isn't this a farming community? What do they need with grain?

BOOK

We do seem to be bringing coal to Newcastle.

JAYNE
It's grain, Shepherd. Ain't coal.

ZOE
(ignoring them)
I don't like this.

WASH
Maybe we should just eat the grain. Cut out the middle man.

MAL
(ignoring Wash)
Long's he's got the money, everything's shiny.

EXT. PATRICIANS' COMPLEX – DAY – ESTABLISHING

The Patricians' complex, at the top of the hill, is basically a walled fort around an open square. It looks like it could comfortably house perhaps a dozen families, and is beautiful, if a bit run-down, like an aging Roman villa.

Inara's shuttle sits in the square.

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE – DAY

Inara opens the door to her shuttle, and is met by IBRAHIM AL-ASJAR, sixties, tall, spare, dark-skinned, wearing a turban and robes.

INARA
(bowing)
Salaam Aleikum.

IBRAHIM
Aleikum Salaam.

INARA
(stepping aside)
Please, come in.

Ibrahim enters the shuttle and Inara closes the door behind him.

IBRAHIM
Your images do not do you justice.

Inara smiles and invites him further into the shuttle.

IBRAHIM (cont'd)

I apologize for the delay. As you may have noticed on your flight in, there was some small civil unrest. I trust your journey here was trouble-free?

Inara begins to pour tea for them.

INARA

Actually, our vessel appeared to be under fire as I left. Is there any way you could confirm its status for me?

IBRAHIM

I can certainly do that, but would you mind waiting? I'm quite anxious to... become acquainted.

INARA

(tight smile)

Of course.

EXT. SERENITY – DAY

Mal, Jayne, Zoe, Wash, Kaylee and Book are near the open cargo ramp, along with a dozen barrels (some of which are being used as seats). The ramp opens to a broad valley with a single entrance.

A battered SKIFF comes through and touches down at a safe distance. It's slightly smaller than one of the shuttles, but is unroofed, with rows of seats bolted in (enough to accommodate a dozen). The paint is peeling and it looks as if it's seen better days.

CAPTAIN CHU, wearing a worn-looking armored vest and riot helmet and armed with a pistol and high-tech billy-club, is behind the wheel. Geoffrey is in the passenger seat, and three GUARDS, attired similarly to CHU, but without helmets, sit in the rear.

Mal and the crew stand up straighter as Geoffrey (carrying a small bag) and his men approach. Everyone's hands are on their weapons, but no one draws. Chu watches the crew, but the other guards seem more concerned about the surrounding hills.

This fact is not lost on Mal and Zoe, who exchange a look.

GEOFFREY

Captain Reynolds. You see I come in good faith. Here is your extra twenty-five percent.

Geoffrey holds out the bag, which Book comes forward to collect. As Book looks at the contents and nods to Mal, Geoffrey takes in the dozen barrels.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)
And where is the rest of the grain?

MAL
Cargo hold. As a show of good faith, we'll take this dozen
in to meet with Cariss. You'll have the rest of your grain
when I have the rest of my coin.

Geoffrey isn't enthused by the situation, but knows that Mal has the advantage.

KAYLEE
And the parts, Cap'n! Don't forget the parts!

She moves toward Geoffrey, pulling out a greasy piece of paper to show him.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
See, we need some couplers. Now, not the steel ones,
'cause they vibrate too much. These gotta be ceramic—

Geoffrey looks at the list (and, perhaps Kaylee) with mild distaste.

GEOFFREY
I think we can arrange... some of that.

BACK ON THE RAMP

Mal sidles up to Jayne.

MAL
Change of plans. I want you to stay here. Watch the ship
careful.

Jayne starts to say something, then Zoe looks at him and indicates the nervous-looking guards, who have barely even looked at the crew.

MAL (cont'd)
There's somethin' they ain't tellin' us.

EXT. TALLTREE – DAY

The skiff flies along, never venturing too far from the ground. Chu and Geoffrey are in the front seats, Mal and Zoe immediately behind them. The guards are in the back, with the barrels of grain.

INT. SKIFF – DAY

Mal leans forward, over Geoffrey's shoulder.

MAL (cont'd)
So, Geoffrey...
(beat)
Why'd you shoot at us?

Geoffrey starts.

Zoe puts her hand on her pistol and looks over her shoulder at the guards. The wind is loud enough that they apparently didn't hear Mal.

GEOFFREY
We didn't shoot at you.

MAL
Somebody sure did. If it wasn't you, makes me wonder if I shouldn't be talkin' to somebody else about the grain.

CHU
Patrician Cariss has everything well in hand.

Geoffrey turns around, looking Mal in the eye.

GEOFFREY
Honestly? We had a riot among the workers. Quickly suppressed, but at one point, they were able to take over one of our anti-aircraft batteries.

MAL
What else ain't you telling us? Why's a farming colony so gorram desperate for something you can grow yourself?

GEOFFREY
Crop blight.

Geoffrey waves expansively at their surroundings. They are driving past fields, but up close, the grain in the fields appears to be dead or dying.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)
Hence our need for the blight-resistant grain you're carrying. The workers believed we've been hoarding grain in the warehouses.

ZOE
Have you?

GEOFFREY
Yes.

Mal and Zoe exchange a look.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)

Without our exports, we haven't much money, and we have expenses to meet. Debts, equipment to buy, soldiers to pay... the irrigation system must be maintained. Your shipment will have to last us a long time, and must be severely rationed, if we're to have enough to plant next year's crop.

MAL

(grudgingly)

Makes a certain sense, I suppose.

Geoffrey is emboldened by Mal's vague agreement. He leans closer to Mal, as if they are suddenly friends.

GEOFFREY

The workers would not have rationed. Common rabble with no vision of the future. They'd eat tomorrow to starve next year.

ZOE

Better'n than starving today.

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN – DAY

On the streets of Talltree, the skiff must go much slower. Many of the buildings it passes are dilapidated shanties, some showing signs of recent damage.

CITIZENS in the drab clothing of farmers and laborers watch the skiff pass by. They look tired, listless and hungry.

INT. SKIFF – DAY

Mal and Zoe look at each other.

ZOE

Quite a dangerous-looking lot, sir.

He doesn't like it any more than she does.

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN – STREETS – DAY

The skiff is forced to stop as a clump of a dozen CITIZENS blocks the road. Three vaguely menacing GUARDS are trying to drive them out of the road.

Geoffrey calls down to the guards.

GEOFFREY

Why aren't these citizens back at work?

GUARD

Patrician Cariss wants everyone confined to town until everything's settled, sir.

ZOE

Thought everything was settled already.

Her words are lost as the citizens gather around the skiff, blocking its progress and holding out their hands like beggars. A handful of CHILDREN join the group.

CITIZEN

Food! Please!

CHILD

Help!

Geoffrey looks past them to the nearest guard.

GEOFFREY

Contact Patrician Cariss. We need to get these people back to work.

MAL

Ask me, these folk don't look up for much work.

GEOFFREY

On this world, if they don't work, no one eats.

Another look between Zoe and Mal.

MAL

And what exactly is it you do here, Patrician?

Geoffrey ignores him, instead attempting ineffectually to push some of the citizens away from the skiff.

GEOFFREY

Shoo! Shoo!

Mal and Zoe each toss a couple coins into the waiting hands.

GEOFFREY

Please don't! You'll only encourage them!

As the citizens and children shift to get closer to Mal and Zoe, the front of the skiff clears, and Chu accelerates away.

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN— COURTYARD – DAY – ESTABLISHING

The large cobblestone courtyard sits close to the base of the hill. The hillside is lined with three WAREHOUSES, the opposite side with a large, steaming, clanking, pipe-filled IRRIGATION UNIT fifteen feet high and twenty feet across and deep. The other two walls are dotted with smaller buildings, and the center of the courtyard houses an ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY. The entire courtyard is ringed with LAMPPOSTS.

There was clearly a battle here, and recently. Some of the buildings are still smouldering, and the courtyard is strewn with debris. A JALOPY of an armored car is flipped on its back, partially in a new CRATER.

More than a dozen BODIES, rebelling laborers by their attire, are piled by the crater. Three WELL-DRESSED BODIES hang from lampposts.

A half-dozen GUARDS are cleaning the area, carrying a few more bodies to the crater and clearing debris.

A WELL-DRESSED MAN, wearing an outfit reminiscent of an Alliance uniform, looks up at the bodies by the lampposts. We do not see his face.

THE SKIFF

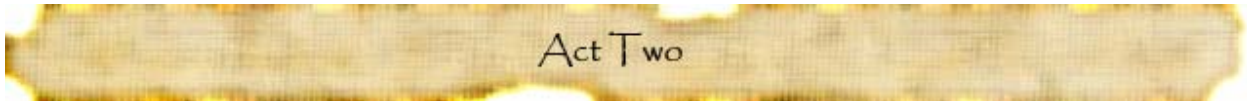
Pulls up and Geoffrey and his guards get off, Mal and Zoe a step behind.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)
Patrician Cariss!

Geoffrey has to yell to be heard over the sounds of the irrigation unit. The Well-Dressed Man begins to turn.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)
The grain shipment is here!

Mal's eyes go wide, and his hand drops to his gun. The Well-Dressed Man, Patrician Cariss, is also the Officer from the teaser.



Act Two

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN— COURTYARD – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Zoe puts her hand on Mal's arm so quickly that no one appears to see him reach for his gun.

ZOE

Not now, Mal. Another time.

By now, Cariss has approached them.

CARISS

Ah, Captain Reynolds! Welcome to Talltree. I'm glad you were able to land without difficulty.

Cariss shakes hands with Mal, who looks queasy as they do so. Zoe watches the interchange, arms crossed.

MAL

No thanks to you!

CARISS

Yes, well... Unfortunate.

MAL

I'd call it a damned sight more than unfortunate!

Cariss smiles and claps Mal on the shoulder.

CARISS

Please, let's not dwell on the past. You have our grain, and we have your coin. Let's finish our business, why don't we?

Mal waves to the skiff, where the three guards are unloading the barrels with difficulty.

MAL

Rest is yours when I get my coin and my parts.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – DAY

Kaylee, sweaty and smudged, works noisily, loosening an engine part.

KAYLEE

Gorram piece of—

SIMON (OS)

Is there anything I can do to help?

Kaylee looks up, a bit startled. Simon's in the doorway.

SIMON (cont'd)

Sorry, I was just—

Kaylee leans down on the part and it SNAPS off in her hands, sending some fragments and oil flying at Simon.

KAYLEE

Sorry!

(beat)

Need something?

SIMON

I... I just came to see how you were.

KAYLEE

(dismissive, returning to work)

I'm fine.

SIMON

And to apologize for—

She doesn't look up.

KAYLEE

Gorrammit, Simon, there's nothing to apologize for. I ain't a blushin' flower.

(quiet)

Not that you'd pick me if I was...

SIMON

What are you working on?

KAYLEE

Jammed-up engine parts.

SIMON

Jammed up? That doesn't sound good.

Kaylee gives him a "not amused" look, then quickly returns to her work.

SIMON (cont'd)

I mean, it can be fixed, though, can't it?

He moves forward, starting to crouch down to help.

KAYLEE

I can fix it on my own just fine!

She yanks out a circuitboard, and studies it.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Ugh! Burned out!

In frustration, she tosses it across the room, where it hits something else, causing a crashing noise.

Simon takes a step back from her frustration and anger. Kaylee winces at the noise, then, perhaps realizing how childish her outburst was, looks up at Simon.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Cap'n's always saying we're so close to the edge, always
one job from fallin' over.

(beat)

I never believed him before.

She sighs and turns back to her work, leaving Simon standing there awkwardly.

INT. SERENITY – GALLEY – DAY

Book sits at the table, reading the Bible. He looks up as River walks in, but she completely ignores him.

Book watches River as she moves to the kitchen, searching through the cabinets. There's more empty space than full.

RIVER

Here, protein protein protein... Here, protein protein
protein...

She bends down, out of Book's sight (and ours), opening the lower cabinets. Sounds of River rooting around. She stands up, holding a large CAN OF PROTEIN.

She looks at the can as if having a conversation with it.

RIVER

Bad protein! Shouldn't hide like that.

(beat)

I know you don't taste good, but you're all we have.

(beat)

What's that? You don't like being eaten? But it's what
you're for, protein.

(beat)

It's what you're for.

Book clears his throat. She turns to look at him for the first time.

BOOK

Does the food talk back?

RIVER

Don't be silly. It's not anything. Can't talk.

She stands across the table from Book, placing the can between them.

RIVER (cont'd)

Just chemicals.

(beat)

Think you could conjure up some loaves and fishes,
preacher man?

Book gazes at her.

BOOK

Don't be silly.

(beat)

Only man could do that was... A better man than I am.

They stare at each other across the table.

RIVER

You're not the man you think you are.

He leans back, perhaps pondering her words.

RIVER (cont'd)

Yet.

She leans forward, pushes the can toward him.

RIVER (cont'd)

Protein.

(beat)

Good for the soul.

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN— COURTYARD – DAY

A half-dozen RAGGED CITIZENS, possibly some of the folks who earlier mobbed the skiff, are brought into the courtyard by four GUARDS.

ACROSS THE COURTYARD

Mal and Zoe watch as one of the new guards approaches Chu and Cariss.

ZOE

Captain, ain't sayin' we should ditch this job and run,
because—

MAL

'Cause we need parts and coin.

ZOE

—Just, I have a really bad feeling. Still don't think we're bein' told everything.

MAL

We're getting paid. That's all I need to know.

Cariss says something to Chu, who shakes his head "No." Cariss is more vehement, and Chu appears to relent.

ZOE

More to life than getting paid, sir.

MAL

Not when you're short on cash. Look, man's evil, shot our folk during the war, runs a nasty little place these days. But we ain't revolutionaries. It's not our problem.

ZOE

Thought different once.

Chu confers with the guard.

MAL

And once it mattered.

(beat)

Don't folk keep sayin' the war's over?

The guard returns to his fellows and they escort the citizens away. More than a few of the citizens cast a terrified look in Cariss's direction.

ZOE

Not for some folk, it ain't.

INT. SERENITY – COMMON AREA – DAY

Simon wanders in to find Jayne sitting in one of the chairs, working on the magazine of a BIG GUN with a KNIFE. He watches for a moment.

SIMON

What are you working on?

JAYNE

(not looking up)

Marie. She's got something gumming up her magazine.

SIMON

Do you name all your guns?

JAYNE
Just the ones pretty enough.
(beat)
The knives is men.
(holds up the knife)
This here's Max.

SIMON
I—ah—Hello, Max.

Jayne puts Max into Marie's magazine casing and works it around a bit in a casually sexual manner. Simon sits down. Jayne's not exactly thrilled by this turn of events.

JAYNE
Shouldn't you be in the engine room or somethin'?

SIMON
I don't think I'm wanted there.

Jayne gives a "Not surprised, you ruttin' moron" nod.

SIMON (cont'd)
Kaylee, she's... She's not like the girls I knew back home.
It's like trying to speak a foreign language sometimes.

JAYNE
Girls is girls. They like the same things. Tell 'em they're pretty, git 'em stuff, kiss 'em... Not on the mouth, if you can help it. 'Course, some of them—

SIMON
It's a bit more complex in the Central Worlds.

JAYNE
What's there to gussy up? Gorram Central Worlds, got rules for everything.

Jayne finishes his work, puts Max down, and loads Marie.

SIMON
Could you maybe... put that down?

JAYNE
Guay, ain't gonna shoot you. Just thought I'd show it to you. Ever fired one of these?

SIMON
Not like this one, no.

JAYNE

And you don't know any karate—

SIMON

I took jiu jitsu for several years in college, but that was just for physical education credits.

JAYNE

All that learnin', can't believe they don't teach ya to fight.

SIMON

I think you misunderstand how life in the Central Planets works.

JAYNE

You're a doctor. Gotta be good with knives at least.

SIMON

Also, I think you misunderstand medicine.

Jayne stands and stretches.

JAYNE

C'mon out to the cargo bay, Doc. We'll have us some fun. Man in your position ought to know how to fight. Gotta know how to protect your women from big bad wolves like me.

He grins and walks toward the stairs.

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE – DAY

Inara and Ibrahim sit, quietly drinking tea.

IBRAHIM

Your mind is someplace far away, my dear. It's been many years, but is this the way it is with all companions these days?

INARA

I'm sorry, I'm just...

IBRAHIM

You're worried about your crew. This is understandable.

She looks down.

IBRAHIM

I must admit that I'm concerned myself about what might be going on in town.

(beat)

Perhaps we should postpone our visit together.

INARA

(relieved)

I will, of course, offer full restitution.

IBRAHIM

Nonsense. Your concern has made me consider that perhaps I've been living at the top of this hill for too long. That and the vision of your beauty make the coin more than worth it.

He takes her hand and kisses it.

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN— COURTYARD – DAY

Geoffrey has joined Mal and Zoe. In the background, Cariss supervises the guards as they cut the well-dressed corpses from the lampposts. They handle this operation with more respect than they did dumping bodies near the crater.

MAL

(indicating Carriss)

So, he's in charge, huh? You work for him?

GEOFFREY

No!

(beat)

That is to say, all of the Patricians share in the rights and responsibilities of government. Noblesse oblige. Of course some choose to take on greater responsibilities.

MAL

You work for him.

Before Geoffrey can reply, another beat-up SKIFF arrives in the square, disgorging a half-dozen GUARDS, one of whom makes a beeline toward Cariss. Chu, seeing this, joins them.

The three men speak briefly, the new guard pointing away from the hill, toward the fields.

ZOE

Serenity's that way. Could be they're talkin' about our ship, sir.

GEOFFREY

No, no, I'm sure everything is—

Another half-dozen GUARDS run into the courtyard, forming up near Cariss.

MAL

Well, this ain't a good sign.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – DAY

On the floor, among the grain barrels, Jayne and Simon practice knife-fighting, with Simon following Jayne's suggestions in slow motion. River sits on the upper catwalk, bare feet hanging down, watching.

JAYNE

(frustrated)

Gorrammit, no!

SIMON

I—

JAYNE

You're thinking with the point too much. Try again.

SIMON

I'm sorry—

JAYNE

We're in a fight! Don't be sorry!

Simon makes to stab Jayne and Jayne catches his arm, then makes a slow-motion punch into Simon's solar plexus. Simon pulls away, just as frustrated as Jayne.

SIMON

There's so much to keep track of.

JAYNE

Ain't no harder'n sewin' someone up, Doc. You just got to stop usin' everything only one way.

SIMON

I'm not sure what you mean.

JAYNE

You fight by the book. Thing is, this kind of fighting ain't got a book.

Jayne walks away, drops the knife on top of one of the barrels and picks up Marie.

JAYNE
(handing the gun to Simon)
You've got Marie. Some men come at you. What do you do?

SIMON
I...
(beat)
I shoot them.

Jayne gets up close, aggressively in Simon's face.

JAYNE
You miss one, and he gets this close.

SIMON
I... Run away?

JAYNE
<Why do I bother>?

Jayne snatches the gun back, holding it by the barrel. He takes a slow swing with the long gun, using it like a baseball bat.

His second swing is a little faster, and ends with the gun practically touching Simon's cheek. Simon doesn't flinch, but manages to look mildly annoyed.

JAYNE
One good hit can bash in a man's skull.
(points to a dent on the stock)
I know from experience. Point is, any gorram thing can be a weapon, and when you need it, there ain't no time to think.

Beat. Simon hesitates.

Wash rushes in, onto the UPPER CATWALK.

WASH
(yelling down)
We got company!

Wash indicates the cargo hold doors, and begins to run down the stairs. Jayne turns and moves toward the door.

EXT. SERENITY – DAY

Jayne, now holding Marie like a gun, stands on the ramp, flanked by Wash and Simon.

A horde of more than two dozen haggard, hungry-looking FOLK advancing on the ship, coming down from the hills. They're armed with a variety of weapons (mostly guns, but ranging down to farming implements and tools).

SIMON

What do you suppose they want?

WASH

My guess is they're here to invite us to a hoe-down.

Jayne glares at him.

WASH (cont'd)

I do love a good hoe-down.

Book joins the three men on the ramp.

BOOK

Whatever it is they want, they're going to take it.

JAYNE

(hefting the gun)

No they ain't.

Act Three

EXT. SERENITY – CONTINUOUS

Jayne waves his gun to hold back the crowd.

JAYNE

What do you want?

REBEL

You've got food!

JAYNE

Not hardly!

BOOK

I think they're referring to our cargo.

JAYNE

Hell, no! That's our money!

The crowd forms in the rocky field in front of the ramp. AINES steps forward. Gaunt, late thirties or forties, she has her hair tied back with a red bandana and walks with a limp, using a bayonet affixed to a stick as a walking staff.

AINES

Ain't eaten anything in near three days, sir.

WASH

Sorry, ma'am—

JAYNE

Don't see how that's our problem.

AINES

I don't believe you understand. They've been hunting us, like dogs. We stood up and demanded fair treatment, and they beat us down.

(indicates her leg)

Chu and his boys beat us with sticks, 'til we had to run for the hills.

JAYNE

(to the crew)

Still don't see how that's our problem.

River appears behind Jayne, Book, Wash, and Simon, hiding in her brother's shadow.

AINES (cont'd)

Can't go back. Cariss'll have us shot, he gets his hands on us. But we stay out here much longer, we'll starve.

BOOK

Could you tell us how this came to be, Miss—

AINES

Aines.

(beat)

Ain't much to say. Crop moon, crops failed. Patricians got the gold to feed us all, but they won't spend it. Month's worth of grain in your ship, they want save it all for plantin'. Warehouses stay full, while our bellies're empty. So we fought. Better to die on your feet than live groveling.

River begins softly humming "The Hero of Canton," so quiet it's not recognizable yet.

BOOK

Worthy sentiments, ma'am.

WASH

Who shot at us, then?

AINES

That'd have been Jasper. Great mechanic, good leader, but not the sharpest tool on the rack. Likely thought if he brought you down, we could collect the grain easy after.

SIMON

(quietly, to the crew)

Can't we do something for them?

JAYNE

That's money we need, or we're next week's starvin' rabble.

BOOK

Perhaps... Some of the grain went bad. The barrel broke. We had to throw it out.

JAYNE

We do that, I ain't the one tellin' the Captain.

Behind Aines, the crowd moves closer, perhaps trying to hear the conversation.

WASH

Three days without food...

JAYNE

An' we ain't so far from that ourselves.

RIVER

(singing)

"...He stood up to the man and he gave them what for"
"Our love for this man—"

Jayne stiffens and glares at her. River grins and quiets to humming.

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN— COURTYARD – DAY

Inara's shuttle lands in the courtyard.

Cariss, who is with Chu and nearly a dozen and a half guards near the first skiff, breaks away and moves toward it.

Mal rushes away from Zoe and Geoffrey and is at the shuttle's door when it opens and Inara steps out.

Inara and Mal look at each other, both clearly relieved to see the other still intact.

MAL

Um...

INARA

(smiles)

Yes, I'm glad you're not dead, too.

She steps down, touches his cheek, then moves on as Ibrahim also exits the shuttle. The old man walks directly to Cariss, who is deferential, but clearly surprised to see him.

CARISS

Patrician Al-Asjar...

IBRAHIM

Cariss, what's going on here?

CARISS

The rebels have rallied in the hills. Our strategy of starving them out seems to have failed.

MAL

Rebels?

CARISS

It's no problem. They're in no condition to fight. We're heading out right now to settle this.

As he speaks, Chu begins ordering some of his guards onto the skiffs.

MAL

They're at Serenity, ain't they?

(beat)

My ship's in danger because you lied to me.

IBRAHIM

(interposing himself)

Calm down, sir. Peace.

Inara puts a hand on Mal's shoulder.

INARA

We can take the shuttle, Mal. It'll be faster.

EXT. SERENITY – DAY

One of the barrels of grain has been cracked open and although the grain is still in whole kernels, many of the rebels are chewing them.

Jayne, Simon, and River are on the ramp, as is Aines, while Kaylee and Book circulate among the rest, bearing opened cans of protein to share.

Folks look up as INARA'S SHUTTLE passes overhead.

EXT. SERENITY – DAY – ESTABLISHING

Inara's shuttle slots into place, docking with Serenity.

EXT. SERENITY – DAY

Mal strides out, followed by Zoe and Inara. He takes in the scene, especially the cracked-open barrel of grain.

AINES

Captain, Reynolds? Thank—

He brushes past her.

MAL

Jayne, what in the gorram hell is goin' on?

JAYNE

Uh, barrel broke. Grain went bad—

MAL

It take our coin with it?

Mal stalks further down the ramp.

BOOK

Captain, it's just one barrel, there's plenty more.

JAYNE

These folks ain't et in three days, Mal.

MAL

And you want to join 'em? That it?

(beat)

We don't have grain, we don't get paid. <Of all the people to go soft>! What's next for you? A shelter for wayward orphans?

JAYNE

Mal, it ain't—

Mal spots one of the cans of protein.

MAL

<Why don't we just give them our clothes, too>? That from our kitchen?

Kaylee shrugs apologetically.

RIVER

(singing)

"Now here is what separates heroes"

"From normal folk like you and I"

Mal turns to Aines, clearly recognizing that she's the leader of the rabble outside his ship.

JAYNE

(to River, embarrassed)

<Monkey crap>, can you stop singing that?

MAL

(to Aines)

Now, this ain't been nobody's best day, but I see no weapons're drawn. What I need right now is for you and yours to go—

River's eyes go wide and her head snaps back.

RIVER

Oh no... No. No!

Simon rushes to her side, slowing just enough to glare at Jayne.

SIMON

River!

JAYNE

Just asked her to stop singin', is all.

River falls to the ground and balls into a fetal position, screaming and muttering. Simon kneels by her side, and the sight is disturbing enough that most of the rebels look up from their food.

RIVER
Murderer!

As Simon tries to help her stand, River flails at him.

SIMON
It's me, River.

MAL
(glaring)
Get her inside. Now!

RIVER
Murderer! Like them. Didn't have to push so hard. Like a knife twisting in a wound! Again and again and again. Kill anyone knows the truth. Kill them all! <Feces-colored vagrants>!

By now, pretty much everyone is looking at River, so when her heads snaps up, they follow her gaze to see the two approaching SKIFFS, laden with guards and blocking the only easy exit out of the valley.

EXT. SERENITY – MOMENTS LATER

Mal, Jayne, Zoe, and Wash stand on the ramp, all with weapons drawn but not pointed. Inara is behind Mal.

Aines and her rabble are trapped between the ship and the guards as Chu and his men surround them.

Cariss, with Geoffrey in tow, walks through the ring formed by the guards. Many of Aines' folks cringe back from the Patrician.

CARISS
Captain Reynolds, what is the meaning of this? Sharing out the grain to these scum? I thought we had a deal.

MAL
We do, I—

AINES
Patrician Cariss. Now we speak on equal terms.

Cariss ignores her, turns to look up to Mal.

CARISS

Captain Reynolds, it's time to end this farce.

MAL

I ain't laughing, Cariss. That "unpleasantness" weren't ever over and you knew it.

CARISS

We have coin and a deal, Captain. If you want to break it to pander to this rabble, you won't get paid.

AINES

Rabble! You wouldn't have a colony without us! You starve us, beat us when we rise up, and we're the villains?

MAL

Saw some rich folk strung up in town. Fair sure they didn't do it themselves.

Aines looks away, her inability to meet Mal's eyes indicating that she knows exactly what he's talking about.

ZOE

(quietly, to Mal)

Captain, this could turn real ugly real fast.

Cariss moves past Aines and addresses her people, holding his hands up to clearly show that he has no weapon drawn.

CARISS

There's food waiting back in town for those who surrender.

ZOE

(quietly)

Cap'n, you know that ain't true.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – SAME TIME

River seems to have calmed a little. Simon and Book have gotten River to the far side of the cargo hold, near the infirmary. Kaylee stands nearby, looking nervous.

Suddenly, River breaks away, heading back toward the cargo door. Simon and Book manage to restrain her.

RIVER

Murderer! They're all the same!

EXT. SERENITY – SAME TIME

Mal looks down at Cariss and Aines.

MAL

Cariss, you gonna shoot these folk, they go back nice?

AINES

You ain't letting him have us? You can see what kind of man he is!

CARISS

We need them for labor. They will not be shot.

(beat)

I am not a murderer.

AINES

(spits)

Ha!

Mal looks down at Cariss coldly, almost—but not quite—aiming his gun at him.

MAL

I know some Browncoats might say different if they could still talk.

Cariss reacts: he wasn't expecting to hear that. Aines smiles, feeling that she's gained some ground.

CARISS

I only did what was necessary during the war. I only killed on orders.

MAL

(disdainfully)

Orders. That's what every <villainous scumbag> has hid behind for thirty centuries.

Tense beat.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – SAME TIME

River, still restrained by Book and Simon, stares back toward the cargo hold door, toward Mal and Cariss.

RIVER
(whispers)
War not over for some. Still carrying that bullet.
(louder)
Bang!

EXT. SERENITY – SAME TIME

Mal holsters his gun and turns to Wash and Jayne.

MAL
Start bringing out the grain.
(indicating Chu and his men)
Them soldiers'll help you.

CARISS
We have a deal, then?

Mal looks down.

MAL
(snappish)
'Course, we have to deal, else we're stuck on this rock.

ZOE
Sir, you really sidin' with him?

MAL
Don't see as we've got much choice. Sob stories don't buy us fuel.

JAYNE
This ain't right.

MAL
You wanna eat?

Jayne and Wash look at him, but don't move.

MAL
(cold)
Did I look like I was giving a suggestion?

Jayne glares at Mal, but stomps inside.

WASH
(ironically)
Yes, sir, Captain, sir!

He follows Jayne, not much happier.

Mal turns to Zoe and indicates the standoff between Aines' rabble and the Patricians' guards. The guards draw their high-tech BILLY-CLUBS, which sizzle with the sound of electricity.

MAL

Make sure they don't kill nobody.

He turns and heads into the ship.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – CONTINUOUS

Wash and Jayne are in the corner, discussing how to best move the barrels. Mal ignores them and heads for the stairs. They watch him pass.

JAYNE

I can't believe he sided with them.

WASH

I don't think he can, either.

AT THE STAIRS

Inara catches up to Mal.

INARA

Mal, are you sure about this?

MAL

I've got to.

INARA

We're not hurting for money that badly. If you need something to tide us over for fuel and parts, until another job—

MAL

Ain't taking your coin. You ain't on my crew.

INARA

I just... I don't want to see you—

MAL

Can't buy my regard, Inara. I ain't a whore.

This time it's not just a casual insult. Inara reacts, flushed and upset.

EXT. SERENITY – SAME TIME

Cariss addresses the rebels. Although the sides are evenly matched (perhaps a few more rebels than guards), the training and equipment advantage the guards have makes it clear that any fight will be brief, ugly, and one-sided.

CARISS

Put down your weapons and get back to work.

AINES

We ain't goin' back!

Cariss smiles.

CARISS

Chu, forward.

On Serenity's ramp, Zoe stands alone, watching as battle is joined, the circle of guards tightening around the rebels.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

In the corner near the infirmary, River looks around in panic, practically throwing off Simon and Book.

RIVER

Get him away! They're screaming and screaming and they won't stop!

SIMON

River!

BOOK

Be calm, girl!

RIVER

Kill him, kill them all!

AT THE STAIRS

Mal and Inara have turned at River's rant, but now they look back at each other.

MAL

I didn't mean—

INARA

Yes. You did.

(beat)

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have offered. I know how you must feel—

MAL

You don't know anything.

INARA

I'm just trying to help—

MAL

You can't.

(sulky, quiet)

Go back to the Central Worlds where you belong.

Inara reacts again.

INARA

Get me there and I'm off.

Now, it's Mal's turn to react.

MAL

Lao tien, Inara, I'm—I'm such a—How can you stand me?

Beat. Some of the tension between them drains.

MAL (cont'd)

Even I can't stand me!

INARA

(bittersweet)

Years of training. And sometimes even that wears thin.

ACROSS THE CARGO HOLD

Zoe pokes her head in from the ramp.

ZOE

Captain, you should be out here!

EXT. SERENITY – SAME TIME

The battle's over, and there are no surprises. A few of the guards are injured and have retreated to the skiffs, but most are standing guard over the rebels. All of the rebels are injured, and many cannot stand under their own power.

The opened barrel is on its side, the grain spilled over the field.

Cariss confronts Aines, who is at one end of the line of prisoners.

CARISS

It's over.

She spits in his face. He draws his pistol and slaps her hard with it, driving her to her knees. He stands over her.

CARISS (cont'd)

Chu! Find me a few more volunteers. We'll need some examples to inspire the rest.

CHU

Sir?

CARISS

Take those who are most badly wounded, so we won't lose too much productivity.

GEOFFREY

(timidly)

Patrician Al-Asjar's directives—

CARISS

Damn that <pathetic old man>! Doesn't know how to run a colony.

(to Chu)

Do it!

CHU

(unenthusiastic)

Yes, sir.

Chu salutes smartly and walks off. Cariss points his pistol at Aines. He slowly walks around so he's behind her, watching her carefully the entire time.

Cariss puts the gun to the back of her head.

Aines flinches, but he's got the advantage.

Cariss smiles—

And, out of nowhere, Mal sucker-punches Cariss, snapping the man's head back. Cariss's gun goes flying.

As Cariss careens away, Mal smiles... until he realizes that more than half of Chu's men have their weapons trained on him, more than a dozen guns in all.

Act Four

EXT. SERENITY – CONTINUOUS

Cariss picks himself up, glaring at Mal. The guards have turned their attention from the prisoners to Mal. Zoe steps up next to Mal.

CARISS

Are you insane? I should have you killed.

MAL

We ain't your workers.

ZOE

And you wouldn't get far.

Zoe gestures to the ramp. Jayne and Wash are there, both armed. Jayne waves Marie casually and grins. Wash looks like he's rather be inside.

CARISS

It's none of your business what I do with my people.

Cariss retrieves his gun.

MAL

They ain't just your people. Don't all of the Patricians share in the rights and responsibilities of government?

Mal looks pointedly at Geoffrey. Zoe takes a step away from Mal, looking directly at Cariss, who has just aimed his gun at Mal.

ZOE

You don't want to do this. Word gets out our ship went missing, won't nobody want to make deliveries here.

MAL

(to Geoffrey)

Say something, gorramit!

GEOFFREY

What should I say?

ZOE

(to Cariss)

I'm sure we can work something out. How much is your revenge worth?

CARISS

A great deal. Things will never quiet down if the likes of these rabble aren't punished.

MAL

(to Geoffrey)

"They don't work, no one eats." How about that?

ZOE

(to Cariss)

We'll return the extra twenty-five percent if we resolve this without guns.

GEOFFREY

They are worth more to us alive.

Cariss glares at Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY (cont'd)

They can't work if they're dead.

CARISS

(to Zoe)

The twenty-five back. And half of the original coin. For not holding up your end of the bargain.

He indicates the spilled barrel.

MAL

Half!? That's one barrel out of more'n a hundred, and we're barely making a profit as is!

Mal reigns himself in as he looks at the guns pointed his way.

MAL (cont'd)

We ain't dealing with you. Nothing to stop you from turning and shooting them the moment we break atmo.

GEOFFREY

I assure you, they won't be harmed further.

MAL

That ain't much of a guarantee.

(beat)

No offense.

Geoffrey nods. He understands.

CHU
My men will keep them alive if ordered to.

Zoe ignores them all and looks at Cariss.

ZOE
Do we have a deal?

As Carriss considers, Zoe steps protectively in front of Mal, who leans forward, whispering.

MAL
What're you doin'? Those prisoners're dead soon's we leave.

ZOE
No, they ain't.

MAL
We gotta try—

ZOE
Not now, Mal—

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – SAME TIME

River has calmed again. Simon, Book, Kaylee and Inara are near her, but she's no longer being held.

RIVER
"—Another time."

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN— COURTYARD – NIGHT – ESTABLISHING

The courtyard has been cleaned up a bit, although the big crater is still there. One of the skiffs and Serenity's HOVER-MULE are parked outside one of the warehouses.

The massive irrigation unit pumps and churns noisily.

INT. WAREHOUSE – NIGHT

The warehouse is pretty empty, even with all the barrels of grain from Serenity stacked inside.

Zoe (unarmed), Jayne, Cariss, Geoffrey, and Chu are near the grain, as are four WORKERS, who now walking away under the watchful eye of two of Chu's GUARDS.

GEOFFREY

That's the last of it.

JAYNE

(wiping sweat from his brow)

That's a lot of grain.

CARISS

Should last us 'til the blight ends.

ZOE

If you ration it right.

Cariss stands with Zoe. After the negotiation, he apparently thinks they're friends.

CARISS

Your Captain's an angry fellow.

ZOE

War ain't over for some folk. Me, I just like to get by.

CARISS

If only more people had that attitude.

Zoe just looks at him, unreadable.

ZOE

You have our parts?

Geoffrey indicates a CRATE not far away, just small enough that one person might be able to handle it. Jayne moves forward for the crate.

ZOE

I'll get it. Why don't you warm up the mule?

JAYNE

But, Cap'n said—

ZOE

I want to check the parts before we go.

Jayne's not too excited about leaving Zoe alone, but she indicates he should go. Cariss waves off Chu and Geoffrey as well.

CARISS

We'll finish up here.

As the others leave, Zoe opens up the crate and looks inside. After a moment, she nods and stands.

CARISS (cont'd)
So, our business is done?

She takes a few steps toward him, her footsteps echoing in the near-empty warehouse.

ZOE
Not quite.

Before he can respond, she rushes him. He's surprised and barely able to react.

CARISS
Wha—?

In a fluid motion, she pulls his pistol off his belt, simultaneously kicking his knees out from under him, driving him to a kneeling position in front of her.

CARISS (cont'd)
What are you—

He cuts himself short as she levels the gun at his head.

CARISS (cont'd)
I don't understand, I thought you were reasonable—

She slowly walks around behind him.

ZOE
Very reasonable. Captain had the truth of it. Those prisoners wouldn't have lasted ten minutes once we left.

CARISS
You wouldn't dare.

ZOE
War ain't over for some folk, is it?
(calm and cool)
Not for some of us <feces-colored vagrants>.

She's now standing behind him, his gun pointed firmly at the back of his head. His eyes go wide at her words.

EXT. TALLTREE TOWN— COURTYARD – NIGHT – ESTABLISHING

Jayne sits at the wheel of the hover-mule. Chu and Geoffrey stand nearby, with a pair of guards.

The sound of the irrigation unit blankets the courtyard, but they very clearly hear a SINGLE GUNSHOT from within the warehouse.

Before Chu and the guards can react, Jayne's hand is on his gun.

He doesn't draw, but looks at Chu, as do the guards. Chu looks at Geoffrey. Geoffrey looks ill.

Beat.

Zoe walks out of the warehouse, carrying the crate.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – NIGHT

Mal and Wash are in the cargo hold waiting as Jayne drives the hover-mule right in. Zoe, in the passenger seat, looks tired.

JAYNE
(to Zoe)
I'm just sayin' we coulda got our coin back is all.

She ignores him and gets off the mule as soon as it stops.

MAL
We get everything we need?

ZOE
Deal's done, Captain.

Wash approaches her, sensing something's off. She just shakes her head.

ZOE (cont'd)
Take us out of the gorram world.

MAL
But—

ZOE
Not now, Mal.

She walks away, toward the stairs, not looking at him.

BLACKOUT